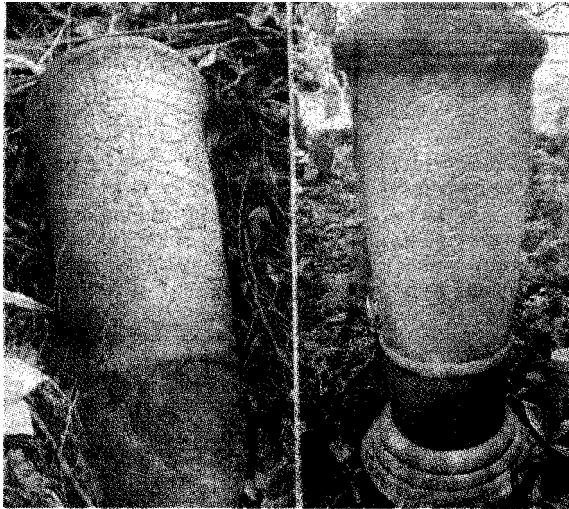
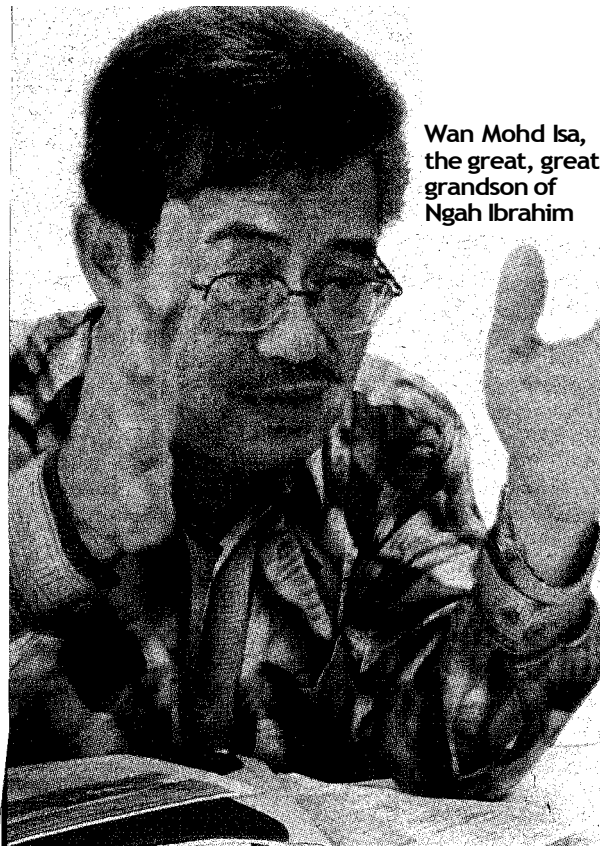


RETURNING HEROES



The broken headstone carries the inscription which shows the grave is that of Menteri Laut Ngah Ibrahim



Wan Mohd Isa, the great, great grandson of Ngah Ibrahim



The prized possession in Wan Mohd Isa's collection is this 8x11-sized picture showing Ngah Ibrahim (seated) with his sons Wan Mohd Isa (left) and Mat Nasir. — Pictures by Jamah Nasri

Perak to welcome home two famous sons after 100 years

THE murder of J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident in Perak, shook the British administration to its core and took a terrible toll on the Malay aristocracy of the day in the State.

Two of the most important players in the events that unfolded, as the British sought those involved in the incident, have remained in graves in Singapore over the years.

Now their wish of being interred in Perak is finally going to be realised.

The remains of Ngah Ibrahim, who made his fortune in tin mining in Larut, and his father-in-law, Laksamana Mohd Amin Alang, the territorial chief of Hilir Perak, will arrive on Perak's shores this Saturday.

Awaiting them is a welcome that will give the honour that has eluded them for over 100 years.

Grave find a quest fulfilled

TAIPING: "From the depths of my heart, I thank God for fulfilling my quest; to bring the remains of my great great grandfather Tengku Menteri Ngah Ibrahim back to Malang, the land of his birth."

Orang Kaya Menteri Paduka Tuan Datuk Dr Wan Mohd Isa Wan Ahmad, 61, the great great-grandson of Ngah Ibrahim, carries the hereditary title of the "Orang Besar Jajahan" or territorial chief of Larut. Matang and Selama.

Interviewed at his ancestral home in Imping, Wan Mohd Isa said the attempt to find the grave of Ngah Ibrahim started off with his lather. Wan Ahmad Rasdi, who was the territorial chief before him.

"My father made several attempts to locate the grave but was unsuccessful because he did not have the information where Ngah Ibrahim died and whether there was any grave

"Perhaps God willed that I would be the one to find the grave.

A professor of history who learnt about my quest handed me a thesis which contained the information on the location as well as the picture of Ngah Ibrahim's grave."

With three others, they travelled in Singapore and visited Makam Al-Junid.

They searched the huge graveyard headstone by headstone but failed to locate it on the first day.

The effort continued the next day and the team decided to call it quits when it still could not locate the grave.

"Just when we were ready to leave the area, tired and disappointed, I felt a strange vibration overcoming me and was pulled towards a corner of the graveyard.

"As I neared a raised tomb, I accidentally stepped on a large broken headstone. I picked it up to read the inscription. That was the moment I had waited for. At long last I had found the grave of my ancestor.

"It is said that Ngah Ibrahim was near-blind when he died at the age of 59.

"The blindness was caused by years of solitary crying and grieving for wanting to return and die in his homeland. I feel sorry for

him but I pray he will be at peace knowing that he is returning to Malang."

While abundant records are available on the life of Ngah Ibrahim, the man who made his riches from tin mining, the same cannot be said of the life of his father-in-law Laksamana Mohd Amin Alang.

In fact, Amin's grandson, Orang Kaya-Kaya Laksamana Raja Mahkota Datuk Mohd Amin Shukeri Ali Akbar, had to rely on short notes made by his late father Datuk Ali Akbar Mohd Amin in his faded diary during the interview with the *New Straits Times*.

"I don't have any written records or possessions of the Laksamana to show you because everything was confiscated and destroyed by the British after they banished him to Seychelles," said the 70-year-old territorial chief of Hilir Perak.

Amin was a man feared by the British because of his great influence in Lower Perak (Hilir Perak).

"In fact, Datuk Maharajalela and Datuk Sagor, who killed J.W.W. Birch, were under his patronage. However, the British could not link my grandfather to the murder hence the banishment order."

Amin Shukeri said when he came to know about the efforts, being made to bring back the remains of Ngah Ibrahim to Perak, he approached Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali who agreed to bear the cost of bringing back the remains of the two men.

"I approached Raja Muda Raja Dr Nazrin Shah to seek his permission to bury Amin in the royal mausoleum in Kuala Kangsar. The Raja Muda informed me that only Sultan Azlan Shah could decide on the matter

"Raja Nazrin said he would speak to his father on my behalf. Solum Azlan graciously gave his permission to bury Amin at the mausoleum despite his non-royal status.

Both Wan Mohd Isa and Amin Shukeri will be in Singapore on Wednesday when the graves are exhumed.



Wan Mohd Isa explaining the events that led to the discovery of his ancestor's grave.

in Kuala Kangsar and was later buried at the royal mausoleum there.

But Ngah Ibrahim, Amin and Shahbandar's pleas to breathe their last in Perak were rejected by the British who believed they were still a threat to their administration in the State.

Instead, they were deported to Sarawak from Seychelles and later to Singapore.

The fate of the Shahbandar is not known although it is believed

that he died in Singapore.

While the grave of Amin was identified around the late 1980s by one of his descendants in Singapore, the journey to find the grave of Ngah Ibrahim took a longer time.

The effort was first started by Larut, Matang and Selama's territorial chief Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Rasdi back in the early 1990s.

Despite numerous trips, he was unable to find the grave due to un-

certainty about the place where Ngah Ibrahim was buried.

And when Wan Ahmad's son, Datuk Dr Wan Mohd Isa, assumed the hereditary territorial chief's position, he continued his father's mission.

The son was luckier.

In early 2002, a professor of history handed Wan Mohd Isa a thesis on Ngah Ibrahim written by a Universiti Malaya undergraduate. The thesis written by Wee Choon Siang in 1952, titled *Ngah Ibrahim*

in Larut 1858-1874, mentioned that Ngah Ibrahim died in Singapore and was buried at the Makam Al-Junid.

In August 2004, Wan Mohd Isa and three others travelled to Singapore and began their search for the grave, succeeding in locating it at the place stated by Wee.

The negotiations to bring back the remains of Ngah Ibrahim then started.

At the same time, Amin's grandson, Datuk Mohd Amin

Shukeri Ali Akbar, the present territorial chief of Hilir Perak, submitted a request to the Perak Government to have the remains of his grandfather brought back to Perak.

The Perak State Government agreed to bring back the two heroes and give them a suitable burial.

Wan Isa and Amin believe Ngah Ibrahim and Amin will "find peace once they return home, back to the soil of their birth".

Perhaps God willed that I would be the one to find the grave. A professor of history who learnt about my quest handed me a thesis which contained the information on the location as well as the picture of Ngah Ibrahim's grave."

Homecoming for Perak's forgotten heroes

Final resting place for Ngah Ibrahim and Amin



Wan Mohd Isa (left) and the team which helped him find the grave of Tengku Menteri Ngah Ibrahim of Larut at Makam Al-Junid in Singapore in August 2004.

• **By Jaspal Singh**
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TAIPING: The quest to bring back the remains of two of Perak's most illustrious sons from Singapore is coming to an end.

Tengku Menteri Ngah Ibrahim of Larut and Laksamana Mohd Amin Alang, the territorial chief of Hilir Perak, will be given the honour and respect rightly due to them this Saturday.

When the Royal Malaysian

Navy ship KD *Laksamana* docks at the Lumut naval base, the remains of the forgotten Malay heroes will be accorded a ceremonial welcome.

On hand will be a guard-of-honour mounted by members of all three wings of the armed forces.

Thanks to the efforts of the National Heritage Department, Museum and Antiquities Department and the Perak Government, Ngah Ibrahim will be laid to rest

at the Matang Museum Complex.

The complex was once the home of the richest Malay in the 19th century, and it doubled up as a fort from which Ngah Ibrahim administered Larut as its "Menteri".

This will be in sharp contrast to the humble burial that Ngah Ibrahim and Amin received in Singapore in 1895 and 1908 respectively. The British were only too happy to hasten the proceedings so that their roles in the oppo-

sition to the colonial administration would be quickly forgotten.

The remains of Amin will be buried at the Perak Royal Mausoleum in Kuala Kangsar, next to the grave of his once-exiled compatriot, Sultan Abdullah.

Ngah Ibrahim and Amin were implicated in the murder of Perak's first British Resident J.W.W. Birch in 1875, an event which led to years of turmoil in the State.

The Tengku Menteri was never tried in a court of law and exiled

because of his close relationship with those directly involved in the murder in Pasir Salak.

Datuk Sagor, Datuk Mahara-jalela and Pak Indut, Mahara-jalela's father-in-law, were tried and hanged in Matang in 1877 while Sultan Abdullah of Perak, Ngah Ibrahim, Amin and Datuk Shahbandar were exiled to the Seychelles.

Sultan Abdullah, pardoned after 16 years in exile, was allowed to return to Perak where he lived